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VOLUME 8

Malawi

Second Edition

Samuel Decalo

Compiler

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Introduction

Malawi is 525 miles long but only 50-100 miles wide. Eighty per cent of the territory is land, for the country includes most of the 350-mile-long Lake Malawi, an extension of the Great Rift Valley and Africa's third-largest body of water. Out of the Lake's southern extremity and beyond the country's borders into the Zambezi flows the Shire River. Beneath Mount Mulanje (at 3,050 metres Central Africa's highest peak), the Shire is flanked by fertile highlands and estates, and further south by equally fertile though low-lying land. Despite high rugged ridges in the north, good rainfall and some of the most fertile soils in Central Africa make more than half of Malawi's land suitable for cultivation.

Over eight million people live in Malawi, Africa's third most densely populated state. Although it contains eight major ethnic groups, Malawi possesses considerable ethno-linguistic uniformity. The national languagte, Chichewa, is the first language of half the population and is understood by three-quarters of the people. There are, however, acute demographic and economic imbalances, exacerbated by President Banda's policies, and these have given cause for concern. The population is unevenly distributed, with half – including part of the numerically dominant Chewa – residing in the Southern Region. That is by far the most developed area, and includes the country's former capital (Zomba) and its main economic nerve centre and largest town (Blantyre). The 1975 relocation of Malawi's capital to Lilongwe (a move which was greatly assisted financially by South Africa), resulted in a demographic shift towards the Central Region (Malawi's granary), where 40 per cent of the population resides (including the other part of the Chewa), and where Banda's home town, Kasungu, is located. By contrast, the Northern Region has poor soils and a history of economic neglect. Twelve per cent of the population live in this undeveloped area and it has traditionally been little more than a manpower reservoir for the plantations of the south and for the mines of neighbouring states.

Provisional annotated chronological list of witch-finding movements in Malawi, 1850-1980.
See item no. 158.

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See item no. 416.

Directory of Malawi libraries.
See item no. 440.

An inventory of S&T library facilities available in Malawi.
See item no. 441.

Printing presses and publishing in Malawi.
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Map of Malawi

This map shows the more important towns and other features.